

## **Housing Rights for Victims of Domestic and Sexual Violence Act**

Victims of domestic violence should not have to choose between their safety and their shelter. That is why the Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005 made it unlawful to deny an individual Section 6 or Section 8 housing assistance *just because* the individual is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking. The bill had overwhelming bipartisan support: it passed the Senate with unanimous consent, and it was signed into law by President Bush.

Those housing protections have proven invaluable. In Ohio, they prevented a landlord from evicting a working mother after her ex-boyfriend broke into her home and burned her child while she was on the job. In Illinois, they allowed a mother to keep her home after she called the police to report her ex-boyfriend's repeated violations of a restraining order. And in Florida, they enabled a mother of five to keep her home after her abusive ex-husband broke down the door to her apartment and beat her.

For all of its successes, however, the 2005 VAWA reauthorization bill contains a number of gaps. The Housing Rights for Victims of Domestic and Sexual Violence Act builds upon that bill's successes and addresses its shortcomings. It:

- **Protects victims of sexual assault.** Today, VAWA's housing protections apply only to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. This Act covers victims of sexual assault as well. Public housing programs are vital resources for many victims of sexual assault, yet these vulnerable victims are not currently protected under existing law.
- **Applies existing legal protections to additional federal housing programs.** The 2005 VAWA reauthorization bill's housing protections apply only to the Section 6 and Section 8 housing programs. But a victim's rights should not depend on the type of housing assistance she receives. This Act applies these protections to nine additional federal programs, covering more than 4 million housing units.
- **Provides emergency transfer policies,** which will allow victims to relocate to other available housing units if they would remain in danger by staying in their current dwelling.

This bill has been endorsed by nearly two dozen organizations, including the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence, the National Network to End Domestic Violence, the National Women's Law Center, the National Housing Law Project, the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the National AIDS Housing Coalition, the National Center on Family Homelessness, and the National Alliance on Mental Illness. For more information, please contact Joshua Riley, Counsel to Senator Al Franken, at 4-1031 or [Joshua\\_Riley@judiciary-dem.senate.gov](mailto:Joshua_Riley@judiciary-dem.senate.gov).